

INTERNATIONAL



So You Want To Be An ISDT Star?

by Gary Van Voorhis

Just in case you haven't heard, the United States did have representatives competing in the olympics. We won five gold, 14 silver and six bronze medals. None of them came from swimming, diving, track and field, horseback riding or any other event in the Summer Olympics and the venue was not Moscow. *Our* Olympics are the International Six Days Trial, more commonly known as the ISDT. This year the 55th Six Jours Internationaux was held in the countryside surrounding Brioude, a small city in south-central France. An annual event since 1913 except for periods of war and political upheaval, the ISDT is often referred to as the Olympics of Motorcycling.

The obvious parallels are that it is a contest between nations and both East and West are represented. There are no cash prizes up for grabs, finishers vie for medals in the traditional olympic gold, silver and bronze. Politics, though a factor last year when the Czechs and East Germans combined their might to bar an entry from South Africa from competing, did not make an appearance this year.

What is the ISDT? In short, a contest to select the best off-road riders in the world. Some people describe the ISDT as being six individual enduros run back-to-back although that is vast oversimplification. The event is best likened to an off-road car TSD (time, speed and distance) rally. To do well and earn a medal a rider must be

prepared to maintain a tight time schedule on a pre-designated route over varied terrain while maintaining his motorcycle without outside assistance. The format for this year's event was five days riding with each route approximately 180 miles long plus two special tests and an acceleration test (more about those later). The sixth day route is shortened to less than 100 miles with the afternoon taken up with the running of the final test. This, like the special tests, is a race against the clock. However, this time the rider has company on the course because it is run with motocross style heats rather than the individual rider format of the special test. The significance is that a fast time (in relation to the class leader) may in some instances be enough to move a rider up a medal grade.

There are two time schedules designated A and B with A the faster by about ten percent overall. Riders are told of the time schedule for the following day on the previous night. The schedules have a double purpose in that easy trail can be made difficult by changing the schedule and compensations can be made in the event of bad weather. In either event a rider's key time, his time due at each check to have his card punched, is known before he starts each day.

There is no penalty for early arrival at the checkpoint area providing you do not go through the check until your minute shows on the official clocks. A rider is also

allowed two minutes past his due time (called a late arrival allowance designed to cover delays enroute) but for every minute late thereafter he receives a 60 point penalty (corresponding to 60 seconds late. Inadvertently checking through early is also worth 60 points per minute.) Once a rider uses his late allowance he regains it only by getting back on his minute at succeeding checks.

In addition to staying on time, the rider must also ride a timed acceleration test (drag race style) and two timed special tests each day over an approximately two mile course resembling a very tight and twisty motocross track.

Position in class is determined by an accumulation of route points and the scores from acceleration and special tests. Everything is related to time in seconds. Gold medals are awarded to riders who finish the six days within ten percent of the score of the class leader. Silver medalists are those who finish within 40 percent of the class leader while riders receive a bronze medal if they finish without "houring out" (not arriving at a check more than one hour past designated arrival time) or being otherwise disqualified. Although points are cumulative, time is not and a rider may finish 59 minutes into his hour each day and still start fresh on the next.

The emphasis is also on maintenance as well as riding ability. You may effect repairs on the trail with spares and tools you

SIX DAY TRIAL



Pomp and Ceremony at the opening of the Motorcycling Olympics



Larry Roeseler, best American scorer, in one of the special tests.

Kevin LaVoie, in the role of mechanical wizard, does another 10-minute top end job before the start of day three.



are carrying, or at gas stops and checkpoints if you arrive early, and prior to impounding your bike at day's end—again if you arrive early. There is also a ten minute work period each morning before you start. No outside assistance is allowed other than putting air in tires and filling the gas tank. Tools needed may be dropped by the bike as can many spare parts not carried by the rider, but only in designated work areas at checks and stops and never on the trail.

Two days prior to the start of the event the bikes are taken to a final inspection where they are marked by the event organizer in six places with a special paint to identify the parts and discourage replacement. The parts marked are the frame, both wheel hubs, the center of the engine cases, headlight and exhaust silencer. Basically you can rebuild anything while not being able to replace those parts. Realistically, about all you have time for is basic maintenance. However, there are some who are mechanical wizards. Kawasaki's Kevin LaVoie kept his Silver Vase ride going by performing top end jobs on consecutive days in less than ten minutes each prior to the start. He had dismantled the top end prior to impound each night.

Tire changes are another thing. You can repair tubes as often as necessary, but new rubber must be changed only before the start or at the end of each day. Front and rear tire changes in less than eight minutes

were not uncommon.

OK, your appetite is whetted and you figure that you're a fast trail rider and a good mechanic. How do you sign-up to represent the good old U. S. of A? It's easy. You submit a letter to the American Motorcyclist Association stating your wish to attempt to qualify for the team. Each year a Reliability Trials Championship Series is run. This year there were seven events—six Two-Day Qualifiers and one Three-Day Qualifier. A rider's three best scores count toward selection. 39 riders from more than 200 on the letter of intent list were selected: four 125cc riders, nine in the 175cc class and 13 each from the 250 and 500cc classes.

Competition in the ISDT is on many levels apart from individual. The World Trophy Team is the most prestigious with six riders (in three displacement classes) competing. The Silver Vase Team must have two different displacement classes among the four rider team. There are also Manufacturer's Team entries and Club Team entries.

How did we fare in 1980? Not too well. In fact, both our Trophy and Vase squads finished tenth. Nothing to write home about. John Morgan, Suzuki's off-road team manager, capably handled our World Trophy Team. He felt we should have done better. "It seems that we don't get going until day four and by then we're playing catch-up although in reality we are riding>



Trophy Team member Ed Lojak, at speed and paying no attention to the flowers in the French backyard.

INDIVIDUAL AMERICAN FINISHERS

Pos.	Name	Home	Class/Pos. in class	Machine	Score	Medal Level
1.	Larry Roeseler	Fontana, CA	500cc/6th	Yamaha	4798.34	Gold
2.	Mike Melton	Butler, GA	250cc/5th	Husqvarna	4838.56	Gold
3.	Jeff Fredette	Tinley Park, IL	250cc/6th	Suzuki	4850.01	Gold
4.	Dick Burleson	Blacklick, OH	250cc/7th	Husqvarna	4863.96	Gold
5.	Terry Cunningham	Nelsonville, OH	250cc/12th	Husqvarna	4950.82	Gold
6.	Jim Fishback	Fontana, CA	500cc/9th	Yamaha	4972.72	Silver
7.	Carl Cranke	Gresham, OR	500cc/10th	SWM	5049.92	Silver
8.	John Martin	Duluth, MN	250cc/15th	Can-Am	5094.40	Silver
9.	Jack Johnson	Las Vegas, NV	500cc/11th	Yamaha	5186.68	Silver
10.	Bruce Ogilvie	Riverside, CA	500cc/12th	Yamaha	5212.23	Silver
11.	Steve Van Watermeulen	Green Rock, IL	500cc/14th	Maico	5240.42	Silver
12.	John Ayers	Rochester, PA	500cc/16th	Suzuki	5262.34	Silver
13.	Ed Lojak	Tarentum, PA	250cc/19th	Husqvarna	5310.42	Silver
14.	Mike Rosso	McKeesport, PA	175cc/9th	Suzuki	5566.79	Silver
15.	Rusty Reynaud	Springfield, MO	125cc/5th	Husqvarna	5629.61	Silver
16.	Scot Harden	Las Vegas, NV	500cc/26th	Yamaha	5834.48	Silver
17.	Bill Berroth	Wilton, CT	175cc/14th	KTM	5946.11	Silver
18.	Jim Piasecki	Toledo, OH	500cc/28th	KTM	6036.64	Silver
19.	Ray Cosgrove	Camanche, IA	500cc/30th	Suzuki	6230.24	Silver
20.	Carl Altier	Logan, OH	500cc/31st	KTM	6694.67	Bronze
21.	Kevin LaVoie	Chepachet, RI	500cc/32nd	Kawasaki	6919.05	Bronze
22.	Rich Munyon	Capistrano Beach, CA	250cc/34th	Yamaha	7004.64	Bronze
23.	Matt Cullins	Petaluma, CA	175cc/21st	Yamaha	92.6.63	Bronze
24.	Barry Avery	Somers, CT	250cc/52nd	Can-Am	10,734.63	Bronze
25.	Rod Bush	Lorain, OH	175/27th	KTM	11,270.59	Bronze

RETIREMENTS

Rider	Home	Class	Machine	Day
Ron Ribolzi	Oglesby, IL	175cc	Yamaha	Day 5
Dean Joyner	Novato, CA	175cc	Suzuki	Day 5
Greg Davis	Westerville, OH	125cc	Husqvarna	Day 4
Mark Hyde	Lorain, OH	175cc	Kawasaki	Day 4
Frank Gallo	Lorain, OH	500cc	Husqvarna	Day 4
John Fero	Huntington Bch, CA	250cc	Yamaha	Day 4
Drew Smith	Collingswood, NJ	250cc	Suzuki	Day 4
Darryl Keunzer	Union Lake, MI	250cc	KTM	Day 4
Kevin Brown		175cc	Suzuki	Day 4
Frank Stacy	Cheektowaga, NY	250cc	KTM	Day 3
Bobby Pearce	Kenmore, NY	125cc	Can-Am	Day 3
Jack Penton	Lorain, OH	175cc	Kawasaki	Day 2
Dane Leimbach	Lorain, OH	125cc	Kawasaki	Day 2
Chuck Miller	Huntington Bch, CA	250cc	Yamaha	Day 1

as well or better than the top teams at that point in time. We have riders as good as the other teams have, but we need to get started earlier and also become adept at playing the game as well as the rest do."

Playing the game is another way of describing rider support and it involves a lot of things.

Major among them is having support riders. In the U.S. we sort of assume that each rider is out there by himself with the teams helping at gas stops, etc. But in the ISDT the teams are out on the trail, in the form of support riders. These are skilled riders who scout the day's course and brief the actual competing rider on where tough parts are and where he can make up time. Support riders also can ride in front of their entrant, or behind, ready to drop spare parts on the trail or give mechanical advice. You have to call it creative maintenance because it's all legal and therefore not cheating. The bottom line is, it's part of the ISDT and those who've perfected it into a science usually finish high on the charts.

The Italians won the World Trophy for the second consecutive year. They had two support riders on the trail—one riding in front and one behind—for each member of both their World Trophy and Silver Vase efforts. The tally for the Italian World Trophy members reads three class wins, two second place finishes in those same classes and one third place. The result is a tribute to the military-style campaign waged by the Italians, but it was also proof that they rode well, as massive support groups were more the rule than the exception.

The American effort, by contrast, had just four support riders to help the entire team. Further, it's easier to carry parts for one brand, while our Trophy Team was riding four brands. Our support riders were all volunteers and they did a helluva job.

So did our trophy team, which consisted of Dick Burleson, Frank Gallo and Ed Lojak riding for Husky; Larry Roeseler of Yamaha, Mike Rosso for Suzuki and KTM's Frank Stacy. They had everything except a bit of good luck.

We were in eighth place by the end of day one, after Stacy had problems in one special test and Lojak ran into tire trouble. Our overall score rose considerably when Stacy went out with transmission problems on day three. (15,000 penalty points are added for each non-finisher per day). Frank Gallo went out on day four in an accident while trying to make up time on a road section. Both problems might have been avoided with proper support.

The Vase team had Kawasaki's Jack Penton, riding in his eleventh ISDT, and Kevin LaVoie combined with Suzuki riders John Ayers and Jeff Fredette. Fredette replaced Teddy Leimbach when he was seriously injured in an auto accident just prior to the ISDT. Leimbach died

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while the event was in progress. The efforts of the riders had been dedicated to his memory.

Penton's engine quit on day two ending his finishing string at ten straight and also ended any thought of a finish by the squad.

Individually, Larry Roeseler was our best rider for the second year in a row. It was quite a mean feat considering that Yamaha rider Roeseler was only in his third ISDT. The ultra-competitive 500cc class was his playground and he bounced from gold to silver and back to gold, finishing 20th overall in 228 finishers. 431 riders started.

Husqvarna rider Mike Melton joined Burleson and Fredette as the only riders to maintain gold medal status during the entire six days. Our fifth gold medalist was Husqvarna's Terry Cunningham who bounded back to the top in the final two days.

While the medal output seems low it should be noted that our gold medals accounted for ten percent of those awarded.

Our best performance was by the three man Club team of Terry Cunningham, Maico's Steve Van Watermeulen and Yamaha's Bruce Ogilvie who placed third overall riding under the colors of the Six Pence M.C. It was the best finish ever by a U.S. Club Team entry.

Individual effort and a stick-to-it attitude earned Rusty Reynaud fifth overall in the 125cc class and a silver medal.

What makes the ISDT such a memorable experience is the mix of cultures thrown together. There is plenty of pomp with the opening ceremonies resembling in scaled down festivities the opening of the Olympics.

This year 19 nations were involved. Czechoslovakia, the dominant force in ISDT in the 1970s led the eastern block and was joined by entries from Poland and East Germany. Italy led the western faction which included such diverse countries as Australia, Mexico and Japan.

Toshi Nishiyama, the single entry from Japan, typifies the spirit of the ISDT. Because there is very little open land in Japan he drove six hours to find a place to ride and train. He is very proud, yet was smiling broadly when he received the loudest ovation upon his entrance in the opening ceremonies. Although he only earned a bronze medal, it was a personal triumph because his last ISDT ride in 1977 in Czechoslovakia ended before the event was over.

The United States is still new to the ISDT as it is played. We are learning. It may take us a while longer to put together a winning team effort, but individually we have some of the best and most promising riders in the world.



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